

# Broom

## *Cytisus scoparius*

**Boundary Control Plant under the  
West Coast Regional Pest Plant  
Management Strategy**



### Where has Broom come from?

Broom was brought into New Zealand by European settlers in the 1800's as a hedging plant along with gorse. They are both legumes which soon escaped from the original plantings to invade a landscape where there are very few natural barriers. On the West Coast Broom has spread from marginal land, such as roadsides and rail corridors, into rough pastureland and some riverbeds, becoming an increasing problem.



### What does Broom look like?

Broom develops into a medium green, deciduous shrub which grows up to 3 metres tall. It has a characteristic upright growth with small leaves. Prolific bright yellow pea-like flowers appear in October and November. These develop over summer into brownish-black seed pods which explode when mature, ejecting seed up to 10m away.

*Top right: Dense thicket of Broom in flower [Weedbuster NZ]  
At Left : Broom flower and young pod detail. As pods  
mature they dry and blacken. [AgResearch]*

### Why is Broom a Pest Plant?

Broom is an adaptable plant which grows well in high rainfall areas over a range of soil conditions. Unchecked, the spread of broom is ensured by its vigorous growth habit, excellent seed dispersal mechanisms (a single mature plant can eject up to 18,000 seeds per year) and strong seed viability.

The plant proliferates because seed banks can remain viable in the soil for up to 16 years and seeds are easily transported by gravel, mud, water, machinery and animals to aid plant spread.

Broom is also unpalatable to stock, forms dense thickets which shade and reduce pasture, provides cover for pest animals such as possums, hares and hedgehogs, and takes over open, braided river beds forming mono-cultural stands.

### What is the Boundary Control Rule for Broom?

On the West Coast region, a boundary control rule only applies for broom as the plant is too widespread for total control (eradication). The rule states that:

*"Land occupiers must destroy any Broom plants within 10m of the boundary when the adjoining land is clear of Broom in excess of 50m of that boundary, or is effectively clear of Broom."*

## What are the best methods of control?

The best method of control is vigilance to ensure that single plants, brought into an area, never get a chance to seed. Once broom has taken a hold, control needs to be ongoing and total eradication is very difficult. Grazing is not a preferred option (on its own) as the plants soon grow too woody and unpalatable.

To return areas of broom to native vegetation requires a mixture of all methods and considerable vigilance and time as broom smothers the natural re-vegetation of native cover.

### **Manual Methods**

For single and/or small plants, hand pull or dig out. Seedlings are easy to pull. Larger infestations can be slashed but if burned must be followed by heavy grazing or blanket spraying. Note that sheep will only graze broom at the soft seedling stage (up to 6-8 weeks).

### **Herbicide Methods**

For moderate size thickets stump cutting and treating with herbicide gel (e.g. Vigilant) is effective. If loss of pasture cover/other plants is not a concern, broom can also be controlled well by using herbicide sprays containing the active ingredient glyphosate (e.g. Roundup, Watkins Weedkiller etc) OR by the application of herbicide granules (e.g. Tordon 2G). Note that sprays need to be thoroughly applied to all parts of the plant for full effect.

To return larger areas of broom to pasture slash and burn then graze heavily OR blanket spray then re-sow. Whichever treatment is used followup will be needed in successive years.

**For personal safety please use all herbicides as per manufacturer's labelling**

### **Biocontrols**

There has been some success in New Zealand over the last 20 years with the release of six different biocontrol agents for broom. Scientists project that these biocontrols should be able to reduce the rate at which broom invades new areas and/or cause infested areas to decline. However NZ Landcare Research have found that few of these biocontrols thrive in the wetter climate of the West Coast. Land occupiers wanting more information should contact the West Coast Regional Council Weedbusters Co-ordinator.

## Where can I get more help?

For further information call either of the Regional Weedbusters Co-ordinators. They are:

**Mary Traves:** Environmental Information Officer, West Coast Regional Council (768 0466 or 0508 800 118)

**Tom Belton:** Technical Support Officer Biosecurity & Weeds, Department of Conservation, West Coast - Tai Poutini Conservancy, Hokitika (03 756 9100)



[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

*The West Coast Regional Council does not accept liability for any advice given on this sheet regarding application of herbicides for pest plant control. The brand names listed imply neither endorsement of those brands, nor criticism of any other brands not listed.*